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ABSTRACT

An attempt is made to define planning and evaluation in higher education in non-technical language and to describe their functions and purposes. A brief description of the interrelated nature of planning and evaluation is followed by definitions of strategic planning, tactical planning, and implementation planning. The concept of planning is then discussed in terms of the questions why, what, who, when, where, and how. Formative and summative evaluation are also described. (KM)

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A LAYPERSON'S GUIDE TO PLANNING AND EVALUATION

by

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Introduction A principal strength - but frustration - of the management of higher education is its participatory manner of operation. It is a strength because persons with diverse interests and professional preparation come together to determine solutions for the institution's problems and challenges. It is a frustration because some problems call for the expertise of some part of the academy and that expertise is not always readily accepted. It is possible, therefore, that when an institution moves to implement a planning and evaluation system, the effort would be viewed as an attempt to gain ascendancy by a group of "technicians." This paper attempts to demythicize evaluation and planning, to the point that they will be generally accepted and even viewed as "good for the institution."

Two Sides of a Coin It is this writer's contention that planning and evaluation must naturally go together. To plan something, to put in the effort and creativity to develop a method of action, and then to carry it out without evaluating how well the activity which was planned has succeeded, or if the expected goals were reached, is a gross waste of time. It would be like writing a piece of music and never playing it or painting a picture and hanging it in a lightless room or designing a machine and not building it.

At the same time, to evaluate something which was not planned is irrational. Evaluation has two purposes: to determine if one's goals have been met, and to improve the process of attaining those goals. If there are no goals and no process, there is nothing to evaluate.

Words to Treat Carefully As with so many other elements of human endeavor, planning gets hung up with communications problems. One expert states that the first step in planning is to adequately define one's mission and purpose; the next states that the first step in planning is to adequately define one's purpose and goals; the third states the same rule but speaks of goals and objectives. One must either reject two and eliminate any help they might provide or attempt to use each of them while juggling the different terms each have for the same meaning.

It is this writer's contention that there are only three kinds of planning. First there is long-range, global, strategic (perhaps even theoretical) planning. "I am going to build a house and it is going to be the most beautiful, magnificent house that was ever built. This is my mission, my purpose, my goal." Whatever... No matter what one calls it, it is still long-range, global, and somewhat theoretical. For the purpose of this paper, this will be called strategic planning.

Next there is the short-term, specific, tactical (perhaps even practical) planning. "My house is going to be built of brick, with a large kitchen, a swimming pool, three bedrooms and six baths. That is my purpose, my goal, my objective." No matter what it is called, it is more short-term, specific, and more practical than strategic planning. For the purpose of this paper, this will be called tactical planning.

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Finally there is the planning phase which is often left out of many planning activities in higher education. This is planning what to do to put the plan into action. "I am going to need lumber and bricks, wire and glass, carpenters and plumbers and electricians. If I want to meet my mission, purpose, goal and objective, I am going to have to do something." For the purpose of this paper, this will be called implementation planning.

A Model to Simplify Planning In planning this paper, this writer's strategy was to design a paper which would help anyone understand and implement the planning process. In order to accomplish this strategy, the writer searched for a tactic which would lead others to accept the substance of this paper. This would be aided by something easy to remember. Somewhere in the past, the writer had the benefit of Army training in journalism. While it may not have led to improved writing skills, the basic elements of a newswriter's first paragraph have been retained. After some consideration, and a reordering of the elements, we have a simple model for planning. Planning is answering the following questions: Why?...What?...Who?...When?...Where?...and How?

Why The Why question is the long-range, global, theoretical question. Answering the Why question is strategic planning. The analogy of building a house was used above. Let's change the analogy to building a campus building. One must have a reason for building a structure on campus. However it is stated, there is some reason why it must be built or the institution could not gather the resources or support to build it. Why may be because of a shortage in housing for students or it may be to enhance the academic program or it may be to demonstrate the institution's commitment to the community or to test the community's commitment to the institution. A college does not build a building in a vacuum. The space in which it is built is the strategic planning. The Why question is the fundamental question which must be answered before any others and which must be referred to as each following decision is made.

What The What question relates to the short-term, specific, practical concerns in planning. Answering the What question is tactical planning. Using the building analogy, a reason for building a building has been determined and agreed upon. In order to meet that reason, what must be included in the building? If it is to be a dormitory, what must be included in the building to make it a dormitory? What must be included if it is to enhance the academic program? In what ways can the community, which provided support for the building, use it and realize direct community benefit from the structure? The What question relates to the parts of the institution which will be involved in the planning, what the criteria for planning will be; what the planning process will actually look like. It is the "blueprint" for the planning activity.

Who, When, Where The Who, When and Where questions are the resource questions. They speak to the human, temporal, physical, and fiscal resources which can be mobilized for the planning process and its implementation. They further speak to the limitations which might exist for planning and implementation because of weaknesses in these resources. If time is limited, the dormitory which is built will be very different from one which would be built if more time was available. If the human resources are not available to implement the reason for building the building, they must be secured or the reason becomes a sham. Conversely, if no one can build the building as planned, then the plan must be changed. If the money needed to build the building does not become available, then the plans

must be altered. These resources must be weighed early and often in the planning process. Indeed, planning for resources is an important part of the planning process.

How The How question is the last one addressed. How is the institution going to take the available resources and implement what was planned to accomplish the reason for planning? The How question is the implementation question. How does an institution move from the blueprint to the finished dormitory? How does the institution move from the tactical plan to its implementation? As we mentioned before, this step is often left out of the planning process. If this is the case, then what has taken place is not planning but an exercise, a futile exercise. Perhaps this is why so little enthusiasm for planning can be developed on a campus. Past efforts have only been time consuming exercises.

Not Linear It should be obvious that the planning process is not the answering of a sequence of short questions. Every decision which is made must be made in light of the reason for the activity to which the planning process is related. Every tactical decision must be weighed for its strategic impact. Every resource question weighs on both the tactical and strategic plans as well as the implementation of the plan. That implementation must be true to the tactical and strategic plans. The parts are intertwined and interactive and they must be treated in that way

Formative Evaluation It should further be obvious that planning and evaluation go on at the same time. Any proposed tactical decision is weighed in light of the reason for the activity. By implication, the strategic plan is evaluated whenever a tactical decision is made as much as each tactical decision is weighed against the strategic plan. The resources should be constantly evaluated in light of the strategic, tactical and implementation plans. Implementation decisions must be weighed against the strategic and tactical plans and the available resources.

This form of evaluation is commonly called formative evaluation. Its principal purpose is to ensure that the planning process, including implementation is the best possible process given the time and experience which the institution has put into that process. In other words, planning is not something which is finished. Planning is an ongoing process which is improved through formative evaluation. One might say that planning is evaluation.

Summative Evaluation But a beautiful plan is not enough. Just as an excellent strategic and tactical plan is nothing without implementation, a fully developed plan, including implementation is nothing if the activity which was planned does not meet the reason for which it was planned. If the dormitory which the institution built does not adequately house students, then failure has occurred. No matter how exquisite was the plan and the planning process if the outcome is not in agreement with the Why question, then failure has taken place. If an institution plans an academic program, but the students do not learn, then that program is a failure. Thus, in addition to evaluating the planning process, the outcome of the activity which was planned must also be evaluated. This is commonly called summative evaluation. Summative evaluation answers the question, "Did I accomplish what I set out to accomplish?"

There are two things which must be noted about summative evaluation. First, even though it is not directly related to the planning process, summative evaluation says something about the plan. A plan might be well designed with all the right pieces and properly implemented, but it might not be related to reality. An institution might perfectly plan and execute the plans for a dormitory. If, however, what the institution needed was a Fine Arts Center, the effort would have been a failure. If an institution plans an academic program for a certain type

of student, but admits a different type, the program might fail. It is obvious that relation to reality is an important aspect of the planning/evaluation process.

The second thing to be noted about summative evaluation is also indirectly related to the planning process. Each institution has its own set of Why questions. Just as small colleges should probably stay away from huge athletic stadia, large institutions should probably stay away from cottage style dormitories. If different institutions have different reasons for what they do, should they not have different ways of evaluating what they have accomplished? If some external agency is going to determine each institution's summative evaluation, then the institution is no longer a free standing entity. Each institution must jealously guard every institution's right to independently answer these questions: Why?...What?...Who?...When?...Where?...and How?

Afterword This paper is designed to be of value to anyone participating in the planning process at an institution. It represents the writer's current thinking on this topic. It is probably susceptible to refinement and improvement. It is presented at this time so that colleagues can comment upon it and suggest appropriate improvements. "I am planning that my paper on planning and evaluation be provided with formative evaluation so that it can be made better, and thus, better assist institutions in their planning and evaluation efforts."